

# Chronic Wasting Disease Update

## What is chronic wasting disease?

(Updated February 2003)

Chronic wasting disease (CWD) is a relatively rare neurological disease found only in wild and captive deer and elk herds in North America. It belongs to a family of diseases known as transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSE) or prion diseases.

Other TSE diseases include scrapie in domestic sheep, bovine spongiform encephalopathies or mad cow disease, and Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease in humans. Although CWD shares certain features with other TSE diseases, it is a distinct disease apparently affecting only deer and elk.

Chronic wasting disease attacks the brains of infected deer and elk, causing the animals to become emaciated, display abnormal behavior, lose bodily function and eventually die.

Other symptoms include excessive salivation, loss of appetite, excessive thirst and urination, holding the head in a lowered position, and drooping ears.

*There is currently no evidence that CWD is transmissible to humans. There is also no scientific evidence that chronic wasting disease can be transmitted to livestock or other big game animals.*

## How is CWD diagnosed?

The prion that causes CWD accumulates in certain parts of an infected deer or elk including the brain, eyes, spinal cord, lymph nodes, tonsils, and spleen.

The brain and/or lymph nodes are collected from dead deer or elk and examined microscopically using special stains to identify the CWD prion.

## Chronic wasting disease — now found in Utah

Chronic wasting disease has now been found in Utah. A single mule deer buck taken near Vernal, Utah during the 2002 hunt tested positive for the disease. It is also found in wild deer and elk in parts of Colorado, Wyoming, South Dakota, Nebraska, New Mexico and Wisconsin. It is also found in captive deer and elk in six states and two Canadian Provinces.

Chronic wasting disease is a relatively rare disease. In the endemic area of Wyoming, Colorado, and Nebraska it is found in less than 1 percent of the wild elk and in 1 to 15 percent of wild deer populations.

## What is the UDWR doing about CWD?

The Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (UDWR) first began looking for chronic wasting disease in 1998. Over 700 samples were taken from hunter harvested deer and elk in 1998 and 1999. The UDWR has also collected samples from symptomatic animals throughout the state. None of these samples tested positive for CWD.

Since CWD-positive deer were discovered in western Colorado in early 2002, the UDWR increased its surveillance program and looked more aggressively for this disease. Nearly 1,500 deer and elk were tested for the disease in 2002 in Utah.

## New carcass regulations

The UDWR has also taken measures to prohibit the import of deer and elk carcasses from known infection areas. Only the following parts of wild deer and elk may be imported from designated infection areas from other states.

- Meat that is cut and wrapped either commercially or privately.
- Quarters or other portion of meat with no part of the spinal column or head attached.
- Meat that is boned out.
- Hides with no heads attached.
- Skulls plates with antlers attached that have been cleaned of all meat and tissue.
- Antlers with no meat or tissue attached.
- Upper canine teeth known as buglers, whistlers or ivories.
- Finished taxidermy heads.

***Nonresidents transporting harvested deer and elk carcasses through Utah may do so if they do not stay in Utah more than 24 hours.***

## How can hunters help?

Immediately report all deer that appear sick or emaciated to a UDWR office, biologist or officer.

Salt Lake Office	(801) 538-4700
Southeastern Region	(435) 636-0260
Central Region	(801) 491-5678
Northeastern Region	(435) 781-9453
Southern Region	(435) 865-6100
Northern Region	(801) 476-2740

Some deer hunters will be asked to provide heads of harvested game animals for CWD testing at checking stations throughout the state. Hunters who harvest trophy animals from areas where testing is needed may be requested to cooperate by removing the cape from the deer or elk in the field or by taking the head to a Division office immediately after it is caped. The UDWR can then remove a brain sample from the head for testing.

## Can hunters have their deer and elk tested for chronic wasting disease?

Hunters who have their deer or elk sampled by the UDWR will be notified of any animals which test positive.

Other hunters who wish to have their deer or elk tested for chronic wasting disease may do so at a cost of \$20 by providing the head of the animal to Utah State University Veterinary Diagnostic Lab in Logan, Utah. Deer and elk must be older than one year of age to be eligible for testing. Hunters interested in having their animal tested should call the lab at 1 (435) 797-1895.

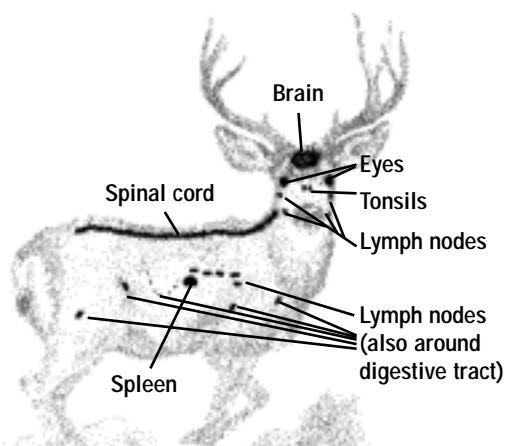
**For the latest information, go to the UDWR Web site:  
[wildlife.utah.gov](http://wildlife.utah.gov)**

# Should Utah hunters be concerned about CWD?

The World Health Organization has stated: *There is currently no evidence that CWD in cervidae (deer and elk) is transmitted to humans.*"

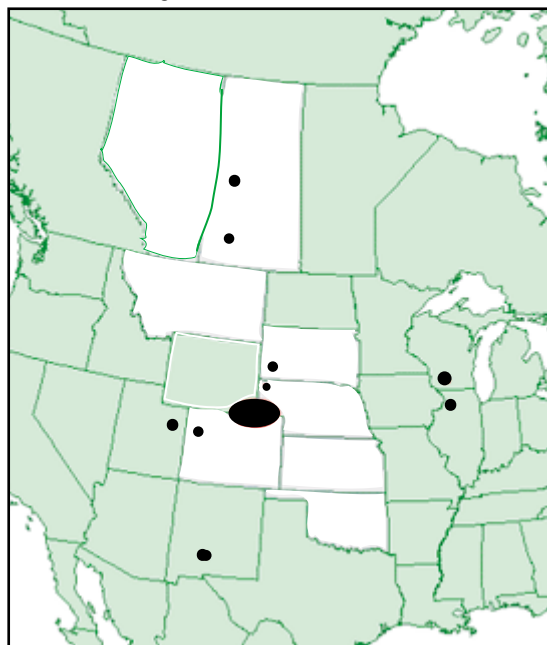
While there is no evidence that CWD affects humans and CWD has not been detected in Utah, hunters may wish to take these simple precautions when handling deer and elk carcasses:

- Do not harvest or eat animals that appear sick.
- Wear rubber or latex gloves when field dressing and processing game meat.
- Bone out the meat from the deer or elk and remove all fat, membranes and connective tissue.
- Minimize handling of the brain, spinal cord, spleen and lymph nodes. Do not cut through the spinal cord except to remove the head.
- Do not consume the brain, spinal cord, eyes, spleen, tonsils or lymph nodes.
- Do not use household utensils to field dress or process meat. Thoroughly clean all knives, equipment and work areas with a 50/50 solution of household bleach and water.

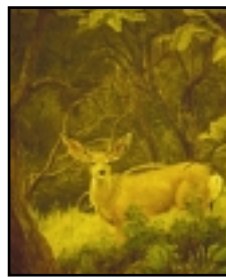


Avoid soft tissues where prions accumulate

## Chronic Wasting Disease Distribution



- States and Provinces with chronic wasting disease in captive-bred deer or elk populations are shown in white.
- CWD-infected wild deer or elk populations.



## On the cover:

Ron Anderson has been blessed with a love of life. Hunting and fishing are tradition in his family (bordering on obsession). Given the opportunity he would choose going 'in the hills' over most any other activity. This continually produces experiences and observances of wildlife that ultimately becomes the subject of his oil paintings. A Utah native, the mountains around him include the Pahvant, Monroe,

Fish Lake-Thousand Lakes Plateau, and the Manti, all well known to trophy elk enthusiasts! There is an abundance of other wildlife here besides, however, and anything that moves can become a likely subject. A self taught artist Ron has held off going public with his art work until he has become comfortable with his ability to realistically portray the animals he absolutely adores. Ron hopes that others will appreciate this desire and be able to share outdoor experiences "brought to life" on canvas.

Ron Anderson  
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P.O. Box 2200-27  
Centerfield, Utah 84622  
435-528-3679

## Noxious weeds degrade habitat quality, robbing wildlife of forage and cover

Because of our diverse modes of transport, many weeds are dispersed more rapidly by man than by natural dispersal mechanisms. **Do your part to limit man's impact.**

### Traveling by horseback?

- ✓ feed certified weed free feed for 96 hours before entering the back country.
- ✓ carry only certified weed free feed.
- ✓ groom livestock and clean hooves to remove seed.



### Traveling by motorized vehicle?

- ✓ stay on established roads or trails designated open to your class of vehicle.
- ✓ wash your vehicle, particularly the undercarriage, before moving to a new area or traveling home.



### General information

- ✓ avoid camping in or traveling through weed infested areas.
- ✓ learn to recognize local noxious weeds. See your county agent for more information.
- ✓ report weeds to the appropriate land management agency or landowner.



**Together we can slow the spread**

PROVIDED BY THE SQUARROSE KNAPWEED WEED MANAGEMENT DEMONSTRATION AREA STEERING COMMITTEE.

# Get Involved With Utah Wildlife

To provide the public a way to give input to the Division of Wildlife Resources and the Utah Wildlife Board about wildlife management in Utah, Regional Advisory Councils were established throughout the state in the mid 1990s.

There are five RACs in Utah. Each consists of 12 to 15 members selected from the specific community or region. Each RAC has the following:

- two members who represent agriculture
- two members who represent sportsmen
- two members who represent non-consumptive use
- one member who represents business interests
- one member who is a locally appointed public official
- one member from the USDA Forest Service
- one member from the Bureau of Land Management
- two members of the public-at-large, who represent the general interests of the region
- where applicable, one member who represents Native American interests

Members are appointed by the executive director of the Department of Natural Resources, in consultation with the director of the Division of Wildlife Resources. Members may serve up to two, two-year terms. Each Division regional supervisor serves as the executive secretary for the RAC in his region, just as the Division director serves as the executive secretary for the Wildlife Board.

RACs hold meetings to hear public input about Division of Wildlife Resources proposals, including recommendations, biological data and information about the effects of wildlife. The RACs also gather information from their constituents, the public and government agencies, and make recommendations to the Wildlife Board in an advisory capacity.

Each RAC is charged with hearing different viewpoints and controversial issues. They must incorporate all perspectives and come to the decision that they feel is best for all of Utah's wildlife and its citizens.

Each RAC appoints a chairperson who attends Wildlife Board meetings and presents RAC recommendations to the Wildlife Board during an open public meeting.

The public is invited to give its input and comments to the RACs. After deliberating on the issues, RAC members vote. Motions that pass are taken to the Wildlife Board.

The Wildlife Board has the final decision making authority. Board members weigh heavily on RAC recommendations when making their final decisions.

From year to year, many of the same topics are addressed during the same month. The timeline is determined by when a specific proclamation needs to be available to the public. If you want to address a specific topic (for example, fishing regulations are discussed during the August RAC meetings) you need to attend the appropriate RAC meeting.

These dates are not set in stone but are adhered to as much as possible. If you plan to attend a RAC meeting, please contact the specific Division regional office to confirm the dates.

- RAC meetings in the Northeastern Region are held at the Vernal City Offices, 447 E. Main St. in Vernal.
- The Southeastern Region, meetings are held at the John Wesley Powell Museum, 885 E. Main St. in Green River.
- The Northern, Central and Southern regions meetings are held in a different location each month.

For information on where the meetings will be held, call the Division regional office in those regions or check the Division web site:

**[www.wildlife.utah.gov](http://www.wildlife.utah.gov)** (Public Meetings)

Public input is the cornerstone to successful decision-making for the Division through the RAC and Board process.

**RAC/Board Coordinator Steve Phillips (801) 538-4718**

Questions may be directed to the RAC chairpersons at the following addresses or phone numbers:

## Regional Advisory Councils: Chairs

### Northern RAC

Ernie Perkins  
3087 Maxine Drive  
Layton, UT 84040-7659  
801 544-5123 (h)

### Northeastern RAC

Kathy Paulin  
1912 East 1500 North  
Vernal, UT 84078-9570  
435 789-4506 (h)  
435 789-1181 (w)

### Central RAC

Rick Woodard  
937 West 1700 North  
Provo, UT 84604  
801 377-1903 (h)  
801 785-3001 (w)

### Southeastern RAC

Dave Bierschied  
411 Loveridge Drive  
Moab, UT 84532  
435 259-8217 (h)  
435 259-7870 (w)

### Southern RAC

Sam Rowley  
5500 N Hwy 89  
Monroe, UT 84754  
435 896 8550 (h)  
435 896-8467 (w)